

W Y C O M B E
Wanderers helped themselves to their second £40 bonus from the sponsors for a three-clear-goal victory when they overcame the challenge of Croydon at a snow-covered Loakes Park, on Tuesday.

The Blues now return to the top of the Rothmans Isthmian League Division One and on this performance there seems no reason why they shouldn't stay there.

Conditions were far from easy with the entire pitch covered in a couple of inches of snow but Wycombe made light of these hazards to record their most convincing victory for some time.

On Tuesday they looked a class above Croydon, who worked hard but were unable to make any real impression on the home side. Particularly impressive for Wanderers were Paul Birdseye, Peter Cruse and Tony Horseman. Birdseye had by far his best game of the season and operated more as a right wing than a right back. His overlapping caused Croydon all sorts of problems and he never seemed to be caught out of position at the back.

Cruse came into the side when Mick Holifield was ruled out through injury and thoroughly enjoyed the first half. He made the first goal with a 20 yard drive that hit the bar and helped to

Wycombe Wanderers 3, Croydon 0

REPORT BY STUART EARP

dominate the midfield exchanges.

HARD WORK

'Bodger' Horseman has not had the happiest of seasons to date but his sheer hard work in this game suggests he will be difficult to keep out of the side. He also scored the second goal and produced the clever flicks and nudges that still make him a constant danger to defences.

Perhaps it was manager Ted Powell's Boxing Day training session that helped produce the goods, for Wanderers warmed to their task from the opening whistle. Their control was excellent on a treacherous surface and in the first half particularly their passing was of the highest standard.

Croydon keeper Dave Cobb was soon in action when he saved from the head of Horseman after Howard Kettleborough had done well to turn in a cross from the top wing.

We didn't have to wait long for a goal. It came after nine minutes of Wycombe pressure when Bobby Davies's long throw was cleared out of the penalty area to Cruse. Although the ball bounced awkwardly, Peter caught it perfectly and crashed his 20 yard drive against the angle of the bar and post. The ball came out to Ian Pearson who sent his shot in-off the near upright

for his 20th goal of the season.

Cruse was not far away with another first time effort soon afterwards after Kettleborough had set up the chance. Kettleborough's height caused all sorts of trouble for the Croydon back four and maintained a constant string of attacks on the visitors' net.

At the other end Peter Spittle, who took over from John Maskell for this game, was untroubled until the 23rd minute when he dropped a long cross but recovered well to regain the ball.

SUPER SAVE

Only a superb save from Cobb prevented Wycombe going further ahead after 28 minutes following a fine move. Kennedy ran over a free kick and Pearson flighted the ball to the far post. Keith Mead got up well to head across goal where Alan Phillips turned in a shot that the goalkeeper pushed away at full stretch. Soon afterwards, Martin O'Toole must have been aggrieved when referee Colin Downey awarded a goal kick after Birdseye had clearly headed the Croydon player's effort off the line.

The visitors fought back well towards the end of the half but although forcing several corners, they were unable to break through a confident home defence.

Wanderers wasted no time in increasing their lead in the second half, which was only two minutes old when Horseman pounced to make it 2-0. Pearson gathered Phillips' header and crossed low and hard from the bye-line. Two defenders missed the ball and Horseman made no mistake in tucking the ball home at the far post.

Croydon hit back immediately and by cutting down on

the time given to Wanderers in the first half, they forced the home side into numerous errors. Even so, the Londoners couldn't capitalise on the situation and with Priestley leading the way from midfield, the Blues regained their first half grip.

The third goal came after 63 minutes. Kettleborough got up well for the umpteenth time to head a long cross back across goal and although Pearson was clearly obstructed, referee Downey allowed play to continue. The ball bounced once for Mead who rifled home a shot that gave Cobb no chance.

INACCURACY

With three goals under their belts, Wanderers pressed strongly but inaccuracy let them down in the closing stages. They tried too many long balls down the middle, by-passing Kettleborough, who had served them so well earlier. Even so, the chances still came, the best of which fell to Kennedy in the 78th minute.

Pearson and Horseman combined beautifully to set up a great opportunity for Kennedy but with only Cobb to beat, Howard blazed the ball high into the crowd.

Then in the last minute, Priestley burst through from midfield before laying on a perfect pass for Pearson to run on to. The defence was split but again with only goalkeeper Cobb to beat, Pearson drilled his shot past the far post.

Wanderers will be well satisfied with the three points from this game but they know the big one comes this Saturday when they travel down to Dagenham.

WYCOMBE: Spittle; Birdseye, Mead, Phillips, Davies; Kennedy, Priestley, Cruse; Horseman, Kettleborough, Pearson. Sub. Evans (not used).

CROYDON: Cobb; Roots, Gonzalez, Hill, Grose; Prime, Sterling, Woolley; Gould, O'Toole, Hall. Sub. MacDonald (not used).

Referee: C. Downey (Isleworth).
Half-time: 1-0. **Goalscorers,** Wycombe — Pearson (9), Horseman (47), Mead (63).

Attendance: 1,000.